

Eschatology I.5: Pauline Eschatology
Covenant Presbyterian Church, Tullahoma - Adult Sunday school
Sunday, March 24 2024

Lesson 20: The Rapture and Millennium

I. The Rapture - 1 Thess. 4:13-18

“The apostle’s emphasis is on the unbreakable solidarity which the people of Christ enjoy with him and with each other, and which death is utterly unable to destroy... The purpose of this violent action will be not only to unite the Christian living with the Christian dead, but also to unite them with Christ.” John Stott, *The Message of 1 & 2 Thessalonians*

- This interpretation is the simplest reading of the text. It fits naturally within the context of 1 & 2 Thessalonians and Paul’s overall theology. It also coheres easily with a simple reading of Jesus’ words about his return in the gospels.
- “Meet” (v. 17) - *apantesis*: “When a dignitary paid an official visit (*parousia*) to a city in Hellenistic times, the action of the leading citizens in going out to meet him and escort him back on the final stage of his journey.” F.F. Bruce (quoted by Stott)
- NT Precedent: Palm Sunday

II. The Millennium - Not found in Paul’s eschatology, unless...

- Read into a passage from an outside text (Rev. 19-20)
- Imposed on the text by a foreign framework (Vos’ theory: “twofold perspective” of Messianic kingdom from other Jewish apocalyptic texts.)

“Paul conceives of the present Christian state, ideally considered, as lived on so high a plane that nothing less or lower than the absolute state of the eternal consummate Kingdom appears worthy to be its sequel. To represent it as followed by some intermediate condition falling short of the perfect heavenly life would be in the nature of an anti-climax.” Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*